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Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fifty-first session on the programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on evaluations submitted to the Committee. The present triennial review determined whether or not the four recommendations from the OIOS programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs have been implemented. All four recommendations were endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

All four recommendations have been implemented.

With regard to recommendation 1 (see E/AC.51/2011/2, para. 76) on further sharpening the strategic focus of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department has taken several steps. As guided by Member State priorities, it has converged its 2014-2015 work programme around two themes: the development of the post-2015 development agenda and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The Department has also established Department-wide task forces to support intergovernmental processes that cut across the thematic focus of their divisional work programme and merged the Strategic Planning Unit with the

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Communications and Information Management Services to enhance and sharpen the coherence of the Department's messaging across the Secretariat. Furthermore, the Department has sharpened its capacity development role by focusing on its comparative advantages in this area; an implementation plan for its 2012 Capacity Development Strategy is expected to be fully implemented in two to three years, thus enabling the Department to more strategically carry out its capacity development mandate. To strengthen internal monitoring and evaluation, the Department established a departmental network of evaluation focal points and finalized its evaluation policy in 2012, yet it still needs to address gaps in its internal evaluation capacity.

With regard to recommendation 2 (ibid., para. 78) on improving coordination with United Nations partners, the Department has enhanced coordination through its continued role as convener of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, which provides a platform for coordination and exchange of information and inputs to major system events. Following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, the Department led the process to develop an implementation matrix to organize system-wide efforts to implement conference outcomes. Representatives from other Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs members interviewed agreed that the Department played an important coordination role through the mechanism of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, but stated more could be done to harmonize the work of Committee members. Furthermore, coordination with United Nations partners is also occurring at the Division level through joint meetings and projects, and the Department has improved its coordination with field-based entities, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. The Department has also clarified partner roles and responsibilities through discussions at Division Director meetings and through its involvement in the Technical Review Group of the Development Account Steering Committee, although more work could be done in this area at the subprogramme level.

Regarding recommendation 3 (ibid., para. 79) on developing and implementing a Department-wide publication and outreach strategy, the Department has been very active. It established a Working Group to spearhead work on developing its publication strategy, which was approved in 2012 and provided common guidelines for the production, printing and distribution of publications. The Department has also diversified its outreach strategy in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and increased its usage of social media. Additionally, an Editorial Board was also established in July 2013 to promote outreach and enhance the impact of publications of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and a user survey conducted in August 2013 indicated that Department publications are highly regarded and used as reference material in research and public policy work.

For recommendation 4 (ibid., para. 80) on strengthening internal coordination and communication, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has used weekly Director meetings, regular meetings with all staff and workshops as mechanisms to coordinate work planning, share information and facilitate lesson learning. The Divisions have been divided among the two Assistant Secretary-Generals, who are held responsible for enhancing interdivisional cooperation and operationalizing Department-wide approaches to cross-cutting issues.

While it is still early to gauge the full impact of the implementation of those recommendations, there are indications that they are resulting in positive changes. Most notably with regard to Department publications, there has been a 37 per cent decrease in new titles published from 2010 (actual) to 2014 (planned), and a 59 per cent decrease in printed copies in that same time period. Clearly defined work strategies, strong partnerships and well-functioning internal coordination are needed in order to effectively implement its complex work programme incorporating policy analysis, support to intergovernmental processes and capacity development. The Department could continue its efforts for greater engagement with United Nations system partners to elaborate and clarify roles and responsibilities and strengthen its self-evaluation capacity with a dedicated function, clear workplan, and regular follow-up.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-first session, in 2011, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (E/AC.51/2011/2). The Committee highlighted the valuable support that the Department provides to the intergovernmental decision-making process, the global statistical system and its impact on the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to enable the Department to sharpen its strategic focus through more explicit identification of its priorities and critical activities, and by further clarifying its specific role in the work of capacity-building, taking into account the need to stimulate cooperation with United Nations entities based in the field. The Committee endorsed all four recommendations made by OIOS in its evaluation (E/AC.51/2011/2).

2. The present report is issued pursuant to a triennial review of those recommendations, and examines the current status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. The objective of this triennial review is to report on the extent of implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the Department. The review also discusses whether and to what extent implementation of the recommendations has contributed to programme changes.

3. The methodology for the triennial review included:

(a) A review and analysis of progress reports on the status of recommendations that are monitored through the OIOS Issue Track database;

(b) An analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from the Department;

(c) Interviews with senior management and programme staff of the Department and programme managers of relevant Secretariat entities, including the Department of Public Information, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the Office of the Regional Commissions in New York.

4. Although it is generally still too early to assess, OIOS also attempted to ascertain what changes, if any, had resulted from implementation of the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

5. The report incorporates comments received from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs during the drafting process. A final draft was shared with the Department and there were no final comments. OIOS expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by the Department in the drafting of the present report.

II. Results

6. All four recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination have been implemented. The implementation status of each of the four recommendations is discussed below.

Recommendation 1: Further sharpen the strategic focus of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The Department should build upon the strategic planning work it has already initiated and further sharpen its overall focus. This should include more explicit identification of the priorities and critical activities of the Department that will maximize its comparative advantages — in particular its close ties to the intergovernmental processes and neutral convening power — leading to a more coordinated and efficient implementation of its mandate.

In doing this, the Department should consider:

(a) Identifying programme and subprogramme objectives that are more closely aligned and build on its unique position within the United Nations social and economic arena, with particular reference to maximizing synergies and avoiding overlap with the activities of other United Nations partner entities;

(b) Further clarifying the specific role that it will undertake with regard to capacity development work, taking into consideration its need to foster strong cooperation with field-based United Nations entities and taking into account its normative and analytical strengths;

(c) Strengthening internal mechanisms to monitor and evaluate its activities (E/AC.51/2011/2, paras. 76-77).

7. The Department has undertaken renewed efforts to bring more strategic focus to its programme delivery. The Department's programme is driven by Member State priorities, which notably include the development of the post-2015 development agenda and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. In its 2014-2015 work programme, the Department seeks to provide practical support to help translate these development commitments into action by focusing on the delivery of four main functions: (a) monitoring, research and analysis of development issues and emerging challenges; (b) normative and policy support to United Nations intergovernmental processes; (c) capacity-building activities to support implementation of global conference outcomes at the country level; and (d) the fostering of collaboration and partnerships within the United Nations system and other partners (see A/67/6 (Prog. 7), para. 7.4).

8. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has also established Department-wide task forces to support intergovernmental processes that cut across the thematic focus of their divisional work programme. Department staff who were interviewed stated that this enabled the Department to better support related intergovernmental issues that are ordinarily addressed in different Committees. For example, the Financing for Development Office and the Division for Sustainable Development jointly support the Intergovernmental Follow-up on Financing for Development through a small core group. The Division for Sustainable Development supports the new high-level political forum on sustainable development, and also works jointly with the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in preparing the programme for the week of high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council during which the forum is held. Concerned divisions work together to support these intergovernmental processes, which are closely linked.

9. While the Department's 2014-2015 strategic framework has not substantially changed since the 2010-2011 strategic framework when the OIOS evaluation was undertaken (with the main exception of the removal of the subprogramme on gender equality and advancement of women and the addition of gender and capacity development elements), as noted above in paragraph 7, its work has converged around these two interrelated themes: the post-2015 development agenda and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which is explicitly articulated in its 2014-2015 framework requiring the Department to:

> ... [enhance] horizontal linkages across the subprogrammes of programme 7 to enable more effective and flexible support to Member States in pursuing the development agenda, in particular the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in cooperation with entities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, to which the programme provides strategic support and ensures its stronger linkages with the United Nations Development Group, other executive committees and various other partners (A/67/6 (Prog. 7), para. 7.5).

10. The 2014-2015 strategic framework also refers to strengthened coordination with partners by more explicitly identifying its priorities to maximize its comparative advantages, in particular its close ties with intergovernmental processes and neutral convening power.

11. Furthermore, in January 2014 the Strategic Planning Unit was merged with the Communications and Information Management Services to support programme planning across divisions. The Department staff interviewed stated that this merger is expected to enhance and sharpen the coherence of the Department's messaging and knowledge management within the Secretariat.

12. With regard to sharpening its capacity development role, the Department has recently strengthened its focus on its comparative advantages in this area. The Department staff interviewed stated that before capacity development projects are approved, an assessment is made to determine whether there is any overlap or duplication with projects undertaken by other United Nations entities through the Development Account. The capacity development strategy that was finalized and published in July 2011 has been reviewed biannually to ensure that it continues to be responsive to emerging issues, challenges and priorities. Currently, the Department's capacity development work is based on five priority areas as defined in its capacity development strategy: (a) strengthening of statistical capacities, including monitoring of Millennium Development Goals; (b) macroeconomic advisory services and international tax cooperation; (c) social integration and inclusion of vulnerable groups; (d) sustainable development, including climate-change mitigation and adaptation and forests; and (e) public administration and information, communication technologies for development, including e-Government. The Under-Secretary-General approved the Capacity Development Steering Committee's recommendation of 30 April 2013 that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs adopt a framework and strategy for a coherent approach to capacity development programming in support of sustainable development. An interdivisional workshop attended by over 40 participants was held in December 2013 to establish mechanisms on how to further align Department capacity development work in the context of sustainable development. The recommendations from that workshop have

been reported in two Directors' meetings and will be submitted to the Capacity Development Steering Committee in February 2014 for endorsement.

13. Following the publication of its capacity development strategy, in 2012 the Department's Capacity Development Steering Committee developed an accompanying Strategy Implementation Plan to serve as a road map and to operationalize the strategy. According to the Department staff interviewed, the plan is expected to be fully implemented in two to three years and will enable it to more strategically carry out its capacity development mandate. It was developed in consultation with all Divisions and makes specific reference to the issues and recommendations made in the OIOS evaluation, including the overall and programme-specific reports. The implementation plan states that operationalizing its capacity development strategy will help the Department to achieve four mutually reinforcing objectives:

(a) Promoting internal coherence and integrated approaches in capacity development around the priority areas;

(b) Improving efficiency in the programming processes;

(c) Positioning the Department of Econmic and Social Affairs as a leader in those priority areas where it has comparative advantage;

(d) Sustaining and expanding donors' and partners' interest in and support for the Department's capacity development work.

14. With regard to strengthening internal mechanisms to monitor and evaluate its work, in September 2011, the Under-Secretary-General established a departmental network of evaluation focal points. The network facilitates programme monitoring and evaluation, including through the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and preparation of Programme Performance Reports. Each Division has nominated a designated evaluation focal person and the network is coordinated by an evaluation team located in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Furthermore, the evaluation policy of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was approved and published in July 2012. The policy provides for two levels of evaluation — external (mandatory and discretionary) and internal (mandatory self-assessment and self-evaluation) — and also includes an Action Plan for Implementation. In 2012, the Capacity Development Office established a Task Force on Evaluation of Development Account projects and also established a Junior Programme Officer post to work specifically on Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Account projects. Nevertheless, gaps remain with regard to the Department's self-evaluation capacity, as identified in the OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division United Nations Evaluation Scorecards 2010-2011, which most notably include the lack of a dedicated self-evaluation function, insufficient self-evaluation resources, and inadequate evaluation processes such as systematic work-planning and follow-up.

15. Although those efforts to sharpen the Department's overall strategic focus are encouraging, it is too soon to determine what specific changes have resulted in its work programme and activities.

16. This recommendation has been implemented. However, OIOS encourages the Department to continue to strengthen its self-evaluation capacity by addressing the gaps identified in the OIOS United Nations Evaluation Scorecards 2010-2011.

Recommendation 2: Improve coordination with United Nations system partners

Building upon efforts already under way to strengthen partnerships, the Department should intensify coordination with its partners in the social and economic development arenas by:

(a) Furthering the development of a clear Department-wide coordination strategy for work with its partners in the economic and social arenas, in consultation with those partners, in particular the regional commissions and field-based United Nations entities;

(b) Further specifying strategies for establishing closer workplan alignment and mutual complementarities with other United Nations entities;

(c) Clarifying partnership roles and responsibilities (E/AC.51/2011/2, para. 78).

17. The Department has strengthened coordination with its partners in the United Nations system in several regards. One main way is through its continued role as the convener of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, in which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs coordinates the work of member entities and beyond as required, and provides a platform for coordination and exchange of information and inputs to major system events, such as it did for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. The Department's Divisions jointly contribute by undertaking research and providing policy briefs to inform discussions of the Committee, and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs hosts a website which contains information relevant to its work, including publications of its member entities, as well as joint publications, such as the *World Economic Situation and Prospects*.

18. Furthermore, following the Conference, the Department led the process to develop an implementation matrix to organize and orient the United Nations system-wide efforts to advance the implementation of conference outcomes.[1] Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 66/288 on the outcome of the Conference, "The future we want", the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (and other relevant United Nations entities, known as "ECESA Plus") have been meeting regularly to discuss specific issues pertaining to the Conference follow-up. The Department has supported these meetings through Issues Briefs, such as those entitled "Green jobs and social inclusion" (Issues Briefs No. 7, November 2011) and "Food security and sustainable agriculture" (ibid., No. 9, December 2011). The Department co-chairs, with UNDP, the United Nations System Task Team on the post-2015 development agenda, which was established by the Secretary-General in January 2012 to support the process by assembling more than 60 United Nations entities to provide analytical thinking and inputs. The Department also supports the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by providing policy briefs, analyses and reports. In addition, under the leadership of the Department, ECESA Plus has been involved in the drafting of the Secretary-General's report on the mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

19. Representatives of other United Nations entities interviewed (UNEP, UNCTAD and the New York Regional Commission Office) acknowledged the

[1] http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/unsystem/html.

important coordination role played by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs through the ECESA Plus mechanism, in particular the establishment of the High-level Political Forum and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. However, they stated that more could be done to harmonize work methodologies and approaches, noting, for example, that economic surveys by the Department, UNCTAD and the regional commissions were based on different modelling techniques that could result in different figures. They further observed that since the Department expected to produce its first global Sustainable Development Report, there was an opportunity to harmonize methodologies with the regional commissions that were already producing their own respective sustainable development reports.

20. Coordination with United Nations system partners is also occurring at the Division level. As two examples, the Financing for Development Office supported two high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD, and the Statistics Division also undertook a project on gender statistics in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

21. The Department has also strengthened coordination with field-based entities. Its 2014-2015 strategic framework includes performance indicators linked to collaboration with field-based United Nations entities, as illustrated by the following example for subprogramme 1:

Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement
Enhanced role of the Economic and Social Council in guiding its subsidiary bodies and in promoting coordination and coherence in the activities of the United Nations system	Increased number of United Nations system organizations, including the United Nations Development Group and United Nations country teams, preparing an action plan for the implementation of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council guidance on operational activities for development and developing strategic plans according to General Assembly quadrennial comprehensive policy review

22. One example of greater coordination is the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is now being mainstreamed in the UNDAF processes at the country level. A further example is the Department's visible role in the resident coordinator induction course and UNDAF programming network, in which it discusses economic and social priorities and ensures cooperation in these areas.

23. With regard to clarifying partnership roles and responsibilities, OIOS identified several examples. They included discussions on this topic at the annual meetings of Division Directors in 2012 and 2013; notes from these meetings showed that the Department's partnership arrangements with other United Nations entities on several initiatives such as UN-Water and UN-Energy, as well as high-level meetings, was one of the agenda items covered. Another example is the Department's management of the Development Account (which is implemented by

10 Secretariat entities), where emphasis is placed on collaboration and partnering between relevant entities at the project level. The Account's management includes a Steering Committee and Technical Review Group in response to a recommendation by a 2012 OIOS audit on the Development Account. The Department drafted terms of reference for the Technical Review Group in which roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the project approval process were clearly defined.

24. In reviewing the Department's 2014-2015 strategic framework, OIOS noted that the Department has made efforts to better identify its partners and their expected roles and responsibilities at the subprogramme level. For example, the strategic framework states that the subprogramme is expected to achieve its objectives and expected accomplishments on the assumption that Governments and other stakeholders would collaborate with the subprogramme in undertaking the proposed programme activities. However, greater clarity would be achieved if the "other stakeholders" were more explicitly identified and their roles and responsibilities defined.

25. The Department staff and partners interviewed stated that coordination between the Department and its United Nations partners is starting to improve, and the specific examples discussed above of projects and activities in which the Department has coordinated with one or more partners demonstrate that collaboration is growing. However, it is too early to determine the larger impact of the Department's efforts to strengthen its linkages with other entities in the United Nations system.

26. This recommendation has been implemented. However, OIOS encourages the Department to consider greater engagement with United Nations system partners for the purpose of further elaborating and clarifying the expected roles and responsibilities for its partners at the subprogramme level, particularly where such collaboration is deemed critical to the achievement of results.

Recommendation 3: Develop and implement a Department-wide publication and outreach strategy

In line with previous recommendations made by the Board of Auditors, this publication and outreach strategy should:

(a) Emphasize the importance of a specific, actionable dissemination strategy for each different type of publication;

(b) Fully leverage the relevant resources of the United Nations, such as the Department of Public Information;

(c) Include a plan to periodically and systematically measure the impact of the Department's publications (E/AC.51/2011/2, para. 79).

27. In order to more strategically focus its publications and outreach, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs established a Working Group on Publications in September 2011. Members of the Working Group included Department Division Directors, the Copy Preparation and Proofreading Section of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, and the Graphic Design Unit of the Department of Public Information. The Working Group concluded its work in May 2012, after convening five times during its nine-month tenure. The Working Group was established to serve as an internal review,

coordination and oversight mechanism to enhance the strategic publications programme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and to seek a balanced approach to expand the effective reach and audience of its intellectual content. At the conclusion of its work, the Working Group developed the Department of Economic and Social Affairs publications strategy, which was approved by the Under-Secretary-General in June 2012, and, according to Department staff interviewed, is now being implemented. The publications strategy is also in line with the Secretary-General's bulletin that established a Publications Board for the Secretariat.[2]

28. The Working Group developed and compiled the following documents to guide the Department in the production, printing and distribution of publications:

Department of Economic and Social Affairs printing guidelines	Includes information on determining number of print copies, colour versus black/white copies, etc.
Updated guidelines and question and answers on the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Publications Programme	Provides definitions of useful terms such as "official" and "unofficial" publications; information on Internet publishing, steps involved in preparing publications programme
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management document submission guidelines	Contains specific instructions on formats and submission deadlines for all types of publications — pre- and post-session documents
Graphic Design Unit submission guidelines	Contains guides on submitting text, images, illustrations, etc.
Graphic Design Unit promotional materials sampler	Contains samples of promotional materials, such as posters, booklets, banners, CDs and DVDs
Creative brief format	Provides the guidelines for formatting a creative brief
Step-by-step guide on "How to work with the Graphic Design Unit"	Contains process flowchart for getting work through the Graphic Design Unit

29. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is also diversifying its outreach strategy in collaboration with the Department of Public Information Publication Unit, including increased usage of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In addition, the Working Group recommended continued exploration of possible new products to facilitate consolidation of reports and improve coordination across Department Divisions. These include an e-Library portal in collaboration with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other alternative delivery support products and practices to consolidate the Department's publications and archives, such as scanable postcards for new major publications instead

[2] ST/SGB/2012/2.

of printed books. These actions are also in line with the Secretary-General's bulletin on the Publications Board, which directs programmes to reduce the carbon footprint of the Organization by fostering digital publishing and localized printing (e.g., print-on-demand).[3]

30. Furthermore, in July 2013 the Department established an Editorial Board that is chaired by the Under-Secretary-General with the Assistant Secretaries-General as vice-chairs. The Board's terms of reference indicate that among its main functions is to promote outreach to enhance the impact of Department publications, and improve collaboration with the Department of Public Information, Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, UNDG and other appropriate partners.

31. Positive changes resulting from these actions in response to the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommendation can already be noted. First, as noted in the table below, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has made progress in reducing the number of its publications, as well as reducing its carbon footprint.

Table
Comparison of Department of Economic and Social Affairs publications between 2010 (actual) and 2014-2015 (planned)

	Planned			*Percentage of reduction*	
	2014	*2015*	*Actual 2010*	*2014*	*2015*
New titles published	70	74	112	37	34
Printed copies (for official use)	68 580	66 650	209 600	59	60

32. Additionally, the Department conducted a publications survey in August 2013 to determine the reach and impact of its publications. Results from the survey indicated a high level of satisfaction by readers: 81 per cent of readers surveyed regarded the publications as legitimate, authentic, accurate and reliable. Relevance was also ranked favourably, with 61 per cent of surveyed readers agreeing that they used the publications for their work or research.

33. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen internal coordination and communication

> In addition to the steps already taken, as referenced [E/AC.51/2011/2, para. 80], the Department should further improve internal communication and coordination by:
>
> (a) Strengthening further linkages across divisions to coordinate work planning in cross-cutting thematic areas that maximize interdivisional synergies;
>
> (b) Establishing mechanisms to facilitate cross-divisional lesson learning.

34. The Department has undertaken a number of actions to strengthen internal coordination and communication, and Department of Economic and Social Affairs

[3] Ibid., para. 1.2.

staff interviewed noted that information-sharing with all staff continued to be a priority. At the Director level, the Department uses weekly meetings as a forum to coordinate work planning and share information, and notes of these meetings are shared with all staff. As one example, the minutes of the Directors' meeting held on 12 January 2012 showed that the agenda included "performance review for 2011 and priorities for 2012", in which each Division Director made a presentation on accomplishments from the previous year as well as priorities for the coming year. At that meeting, the Under-Secretary-General noted that sustainable development was a cross-cutting issue for the Department in which all the Divisions were to be involved, and further stressed that coordination and the need to deliver as one department was critical. Minutes of the weekly Directors' meetings are always shared with staff members.

35. Furthermore, to strengthen interdivisional coordination, the Under-Secretary-General assigned half of the divisions to each of the two Assistant Secretaries-General. The Assistant Secretaries-General are held responsible for improving and enhancing interdivisional cooperation in the Department and assisting the Under-Secretary-General to design and operationalize Department-wide approaches to cross-cutting issues. The Assistant Secretaries-General meet with each other and also hold regular meetings with the Division Directors whom they supervise to ensure that all Divisions under their umbrella know about each other's work and harness the synergies of the expertise in each of the two clusters and as a means of enhancing interdivisional coordination. This approach to strengthening internal synergies was explicitly mentioned in a 2013 Department internal memo, in which the Under-Secretary-General instructed that the Assistant Secretaries-General will be responsible for improving and enhancing interdivisional cooperation in the Department and assisting the Under-Secretary-General to design and operationalize departmental approaches to cross-cutting issues.

36. In addition, the Department also held regular staff meetings jointly with all Divisions to discuss substantive work and administrative issues, in addition to cross-divisional information-sharing. The meetings enabled staff members from all Divisions to share information and learn from each other's work. The agenda for an all-staff town hall meeting in May 2012 included several cross-divisional issues, such as:

- How to approach cross cutting-issues (gender mainstreaming, post-conflict transition/conflict prevention) and take a multidisciplinary approach
- Multi-year, results-based programming for the work cycle beginning 2014
- Briefings on Department capacity development portfolio and activities.

37. Furthermore, the Department has undertaken initiatives to enhance lesson learning across Divisions. As one example, in November 2013, a technical workshop hosted by the Division for Sustainable Development was held in New York to identify actions and tools for the post-2015 development agenda and capture lessons learned.[4] Some of the other Department Divisions also participated and made presentations at the workshop. Also, in April 2013, a special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on "External debt sustainability and development:

[4] http://water-l.iisd.org/events/beyond-the-wash-agenda-strengthening-capacity-for-wrm-in-the-post-2015-development-agenda/.

Lessons learned from debt crises and ongoing work on sovereign debt restructuring and debt resolution mechanisms" was hosted by the Financing for Development Office in which other Department Divisions also participated.[5]

38. Staff of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs who were interviewed indicated that as a result of the initiatives reported above, internal coordination and communication have been strengthened. They reported that the Divisions work less in silos and have greater opportunities to work together in a complementary manner through exchanging information and ideas and working jointly on projects. However, it is not possible to assess the full impact of this recommendation without a survey to determine if staff report greater coordination and communication across divisions.

39. This recommendation has been implemented.

III. Conclusion

40. The mandate of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote and support international cooperation in the pursuit of eradication of poverty and hunger, sustained economic growth, and sustainable development is complex. Its work programme, covering the broad areas of policy analysis, support to intergovernmental processes and capacity development, requires clearly defined work strategies, strong partnerships and well-functioning internal coordination in order to achieve results. The steps taken by the Department to sharpen its focus and enhance its performance, in response to the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme Coordination, are important to maximize its added value within the larger United Nations system.

41. To further increase its effectiveness, the Department could continue to capitalize on its particular comparative advantages and focus its work accordingly on its unique role as convener and facilitator of United Nations intergovernmental processes, and the associated normative, analytical and capacity development support that goes with it. In doing this, it could continue to work on further strengthening its self-evaluation capacity and further clarifying partner roles and responsibilities.

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
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20 March 2014

[5] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ecosoc/debt/2013/index.htm.